

reported from Karbi Anglong hill district (Choudhury, 1993) and from Naharlagun in Arunachal Pradesh (Singh, 1995). This gives the species a wide-ranging distribution throughout the North-East as compared to the earlier impressions of it being confined to the lower states alone. Its resident status in Kaziranga National Park must, however, be confirmed by trying to locate nesting sites which could be in tree-holes or earthen banks. Its relationship with other resident Sturnidae species such as the Jungle Mynah (*Acridotheres fuscus*), the Bank Mynah (*Acridotheres ginginianus*) and the Pied Mynah (*Sturnus contra*) is also worth observing. If the species is a local migrant, which is a distinct possibility, more needs to be known of its movements within its range.

The second new species for Kaziranga observed was the Hodgson's Bush Chat (*Saxicola insignis*). Although Ali and Ripley, (1983) identified it from the Indian Bush Chat (*Saxicola torquata*) by its larger size and bigger white wing patch, it was observed in the field to be easily distinguished by its white throat band versus a black one. The wing patch is also noticeable although comparative sizes seemed a difficult proposition in the field. On 13th April, 1995, four to five bush chats which were seemingly different to *S. torquata* were noticed in

Baguri range of Kaziranga National Park by the second author. Later, on 29th April, the third author saw a single individual of the same species in Baguri Range. The species is described by Ali and Ripley (1983) as having a range as far east as Jalpaiguri duars of North Bengal and Sikkim. Later it has been reported in Manas National Park of Assam (Narayan pers. comm.). Kaziranga is therefore a clear range extension for the species. The bird is also supposed to leave for its summer grounds in early April - the last recorded date being 10th April, (Ali and Ripley, 1983). Our observation is, therefore, also an extension of the recorded winter migration of the species. The range extensions of the two species into Kaziranga is an interesting species record as well as a reminder to ornithologists that even one of India's best known National Parks is yet to be fully surveyed for its avifauna.

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#### 17. RECENT SIGHTINGS OF LARGE HAWK-CUCKOO (*CUCULUS SPARVERIOIDES*) IN THE NILGIRI BIOSPHERE RESERVE, SOUTHERN INDIA

During the course of a study on the distribution of small carnivores in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve between October 1994 and July 1995, I had two sightings of the large hawk-cuckoo. The first sighting was on 24th December, 1994 around 1730 hrs in a moist deciduous forest patch near TWAD Board

Quarters in the foothills (altitude 450 - 500 m) of the Siruvani hills (Tamil Nadu side), which is the southernmost part of the Reserve. A single bird flew from one of the low lying branches, to another branch some 50 m ahead. The flight was typical of an *Accipiter*. Any one could have mistaken the bird for



a Shikra (*Accipiter badius*) but for its larger size, which puzzled me about its identity. I followed the bird to get a better look. I went close to it and there was ample time for me to confirm the identity of the bird as large-hawk cuckoo. It was an overall ashy-brown bird with more brown on the upper parts, unlike the ashy-grey of the Common Hawk-cuckoo (*Cuculus varius*). It had a proportionately long tail, with blackish bands, tipped with white. A few days after my sighting, a bird was sighted in the Siruvani dam area (Kerala side) by Justus Joshua and V. Santharam (pers. comm.). This species was again sighted by Justus Joshua in March 1995 in the foothills of Siruvani (Tamil Nadu), close to the area where I had seen the bird.

The second sighting was in New Amarambalam Reserve Forest (Kerala) on 25th January, 1995. I was walking towards Panapuzha from Maancheri, sampling the low-lying (altitude 350 - 400 m) moist deciduous forests of the western slopes of the Western Ghats. It was about 1100 hrs and I was nearing Panapuzha when I saw a large Hawk-cuckoo. It was not difficult for me to recognise this species as it was my second sighting of this species in a short span. It flew across the path swiftly at a low level and abruptly swept up near one of the trees and landed on a lower branch. The place it was sighted was a transition area between moist deciduous and semi-evergreen vegetation types.

I have an unconfirmed third record of this bird from Wynaad Wildlife Sanctuary, Kerala. It was in the moist deciduous forests near Nellur Vayal watch tower in the Muthanga forest range. I did not sight the bird on this occasion but I heard its call, which went like "Pi Peeē.. Pi Peeē.." The call was different enough to be mistaken for the call of the Common Hawk-cuckoo, which I am very familiar with. The

third syllable of this call was extended, in contrast to the Common Hawk-cuckoo's call which ends abruptly. There was also a shrill note like "Pee whi, Pi whi." heard frequently, which was unlike that of the Plaintive Cuckoo (*Cacomantis passerinus*) which I have heard many times before. The bird was too far from me to approach and look at, and I had to move away from that place to continue with my sampling. I hoped to hear the call some other time, so that I could follow it. This was almost towards the end of 25th April, 1995 when this species was expected to have gone back to its breeding ground. It left me to wonder about the bird calling in its wintering quarters.

Ali and Ripley (1987) report that this species migrates in winter from Hiamalayas, southwards into the peninsula, and had been recorded from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. But Ali (1969) and Neelakantan *et al.* (1993) do not mention this bird in their compiled information on the birds of Kerala. Zacharias and Gaston (1993) record this bird in the moist deciduous habitat in Wynaad and they claim this as the first record for Kerala. However, a bird survey of the Wynaad Wildlife Sanctuary, held in January 1992, came across three individuals of this species in the Tholpatty range, which is again a moist deciduous forest area (Uthaman, 1993). It may be noted that the habitat at all the three places from where I recorded this bird was moist deciduous forests. This species has probably been under-recorded in its wintering range and this is likely to be due to its elusiveness.

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